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AFTER SIX DAYS: A NEW CLUE FOR GOSPEL CRITICS

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The conception of a preliminary period of ritual preparation for occasions of special sanctity is common to many religions, including that of the Old Testament, where the touching of holy things or coming into the divine presence requires a period of previous abstinence from anything involving ceremonial defilement. In 1 Sam. 21 5 and Ex. 19 10, 15 this period is of "three days." The longer period of "six days" is required for the supreme occasion when Moses meets Yahweh face to face on Sinai (Ex. 24 16), and this interval becomes as it were stereotyped in the most distinctive of Jewish institutions, the periodic seventh day "the sabbath of the Lord thy God," to which the preceding six days of toil lead up. The Jew labors and does all his work in the first six days of the week in order that he may rest and enjoy the fruit of his toil the seventh day, just as in the creation Yahweh's activity had led up to a period of satisfied contemplation of all that He had made as "very good." In like manner the later speculators of both Synagogue and Church expected the toil and turmoil of the six ages of "this world," each of one thousand years' duration, to lead up to the blessed repose and fruition of "the age to come," ushered in by the "thousand years" of Messiah.

To our modern view, which makes the holy day the beginning instead of the end and climax of the week, much of the forward look (if I may so express it) of the earlier practice is lost. To the Jew of New Testament

times every Friday was "Preparation"-day (*παρασκευή*).¹ He had in addition a special "Preparation"-day for every great feast, and a ritual observance to mark it (the *Kiddush*). The peculiar chronology of the Fourth Gospel seems in fact to make the year of the crucifixion one in which the "Preparation of the passover" (Jn. 19 14), i.e. Nisan 14, coincided with the regular weekly "Preparation" (ver. 31). It may be that the fourth evangelist is thus seeking harmony with his predecessors. At all events he shows the persistence of the Jewish institution of *Kiddush* or pre-sanctification.

We should expect, therefore, so long as this "forward look" survived in the hebdomadal calendar of the early Church, that the period of "six days," the regular interval between holy days, would have special significance, perhaps alternating with other expressions for the week, just as the *Hexaëmeros* of Philo (literally the "six-day" period) becomes the accepted symbolic phrase for Christian writers on the end of the world, because the millennium or great sabbath of God (Heb. 4 9-11) was expected to dawn when the world had completed six thousand years from the creation.

In point of fact, direct reference to a preparatory period of abstinence before great solemnities is by no means lacking in the very earliest records of the Church. The great Paschal controversy of the second century, breaking out on three successive occasions, and threatening in Irenaeus' time to disrupt the Asiatic from the Western church, was largely concerned with the duration of the preliminary fast which led up to the supreme feast of the Christian calendar. As Irenaeus wrote to Victor of Rome *ca.* 195 A.D.:

"The controversy is not only concerning the day (*i.e.* whether only a Lord's day should be observed as the Easter feast, or the Jewish

¹ In a personal letter Professor George F. Moore of Harvard kindly explains that the Greek term is a rendering of the Hebrew *hakanah*, which has no ritual or moral sense, but refers simply to the preparation of food for the sabbath.

Passover day on whatever day of the week it might fall), but also concerning the very manner of the [preceding] fast. For some think that they should fast one day, others two, yet others more."

This practice Irenaeus expressly says

"has not originated in our time, but long before, in that of our ancestors."

"Forty hours" seems to have been the minimum period of preliminary fasting. "A whole week" was the general practice of the Church in Epiphanius' day (385 A.D.),² which in our own has extended to the forty days of Lent. The *Gospel according to the Hebrews*, which was not far from contemporary with our own Matthew, reflects a system of fasting from the evening of the institution of the Supper to the Appearance to James (1 Cor. 15 3 f.), which this Gospel related as the first resurrection appearance to a disciple.³ Unfortunately we cannot be sure what the interval was. At least it was more than the "forty hours" between Jesus' death and the bursting of the tomb. It may have coincided with the "three days and three nights" of Mt. 12 40, or may possibly have covered "a whole week." The passage has not merely the dubious attestation of Jerome, but is borrowed by him from the unimpeachable authority of Origen. Its bearing will be manifest to all who remember the importance attached in the second century to the correct observance of fasts and feasts, especially in the matter of time. After relating the appearance to James, the narrative continued:

"For James had vowed that he would eat no bread from that hour when he had drunk the cup of the Lord until he should see him rising from those that sleep."

² Panar. I, 1, 3; lxx, 12.

³ It is preceded by a leaving of the sindōn (linen sheet) by the Risen One "with the servant of the high priest," doubtless as a testimony unto them. Had this Gospel a different version of Mk. 14 51 f., representing the loser of the sindōn as one of the servants of the high priest?

It related next the Lord's loosing of the vow of abstinence:

"Bring a table, said the Lord, and bread," and added: "He took the bread, and blessed and brake it, and gave to James the Just, and said unto him: My brother, eat thy bread; for the Son of man is risen from among them that sleep."

Had we more of this fragment of the Palestinian Gospel we should probably be able to say just how long a period of fasting before the Easter feast was commended by the example of the Lord's brother in the interval between his "drinking the cup of the Lord" and being commanded to break his fast. As it is, we can only note the ritual interest and phraseology of the fragment, and its extremely early attestation to the observance of the preparatory days of fasting, whether three or more in number.⁴

Almost equally early and wide-spread is the attestation to the observance of a preliminary period of fasting before administration of baptism, the Church's other great sacrament. The *Teaching of the Twelve* (100-125 A.D.) is explicit in its prescription of "one or two days" of preliminary fasting before baptism (vii, 4), and in the Clementine writings this is treated as equally indispensable. In Tertullian's day (210 A.D.) the preliminary days before baptism were occupied with catechetical teaching, prayers, vigils, and fasting. After the baptism there was further observance of a retrospective or commemorative character. The neophyte observed a week of abstinence from washing of hands and face (*abstinentia a lavacro*).

⁴ It would be precarious to suggest a connection between Ev. Petri, vii, 26 f. and the preparatory fast. The passage reads: "And I [Peter] with my companions was grieved, and wounded to the heart we hid ourselves, for we were sought by them as malefactors, and as desiring to burn the temple. And on account of all these things we were fasting, and sat mourning and weeping night and day until the sabbath." If there be connection, it implies observance of the fast only on Good Friday. It is broken off by the sabbath, regardless of the fact that the disciples are still "weeping and grieving" (xiv, 59) at the end of the feast of unleavened bread, ignorant of what has transpired at the sepulchre "during the night of the dawn of the Lord's day" (ix, 35).

As we shall see, the tendency was strong to concentrate baptisms so far as possible on a particular date, just as observance of the Lord's Supper was focussed at the celebration at Easter. The date for baptisms was the feast of Epiphany or Twelfth Night, i.e. the night of January 5-6, twelfth from the feast of the Nativity (December 24-25). This was the second greatest feast of the ecclesiastical year, commemorating the Baptism of Jesus, or as the name "Epiphany" implies the "Manifestation" of his glory. In later liturgies, such as the Mozarabic, the week preceding Epiphany is occupied with such preparatory observances as Tertullian prescribes for baptism.

The question for us to determine is whether these religious observances are not in part even older than Christianity, and whether some traces of them may not be found on the pages of our own canonical Gospels, as well as in writings which though uncanonical are substantially contemporary.

In the Preface to my *Beginnings of Gospel Story* (1909, page ix), I urged application in gospel criticism and interpretation of a method to be termed "aetiological," because based on the working hypothesis that

"The motive of the biblical writers in reporting the tradition current around them is never strictly historical, but always aetiological, and frequently apologetic. . . . The evangelic tradition consists of so and so many anecdotes, told and retold *for the purpose of explaining or defending beliefs and practices of the contemporary Church.*"

The first requirement under this method would therefore be a study of early ritual and belief, on the theory that ritual reflects the significance found *anciently* in the narrative. Its form, if not sometimes its origin, would presumably be due to the observance, in cases where we have reason to regard the observance as older than the extant form of the story. The methods and data of the historian of religion are here peculiarly serviceable in view of the well-known fact of the survival

in Christianity of earlier religious observances both Jewish and Pagan.

The method is not altogether new. An example of "aetiological" interpretation in common application occurs in the correspondence commentators justly note between the successive features of the Feeding of the Multitude, as related no less than six times in the Gospels, and the ritual of the *Agapé*. In both we have (1) orderly arrangement of the multitude at evening, (2) blessing and breaking of the bread by the presiding minister, (3) distribution of the food, (4) collection of the remnants by the deacons or almoners.

A further instance may be found in the Easter observances to which reference has already been made. In my volume just cited on page xxix, in speaking of the special form of evangelic tradition current at Rome in the time of our oldest Gospel (Mark, 75–80 A.D.), appeal is made to our knowledge from the "Paschal" controversies of the second century of the chronological difference between Roman and Asiatic practice—a matter of vital importance for the feeling of the period.⁵ The difference was already of long standing when Polycarp visited Anicetus in Rome (*ca.* 150 A.D.); the East claiming (with good reason) the sanction of apostolic practice for celebrating the "fourteenth" Nisan (whence the name "Quartodeciman") with "the [Jewish] people," regardless of the day of the week. The West held it abhorrent "to celebrate the sacred mystery of the Resurrection on any other than the Lord's day."

Now the (Roman) Gospel of Mark has a remarkable series of exact notations of time covering the whole period of the Passion story—and no other—from the

⁵ Thus Peter, Bishop of Alexandria (*ca.* 300), quotes a Quartodeciman Trecenarius: "We have no other purpose than to keep the memory of his [Christ's] passion, and at the time when those who from the beginning were eye-witnesses have handed down." Cited by Drummond, *Authorship and Character of Fourth Gospel*, 1904, p. 477.

Anointing "in Bethany in the house of Simon the Leper" (Mk. 14 1-3) to the Resurrection. Moreover the time is divided more minutely and exactly in proportion as the culminating periods of ritual observance are approached. The night of Vigil in Gethsemane, corresponding to the vigil of Passover (Ex. 12 42), and the day of the Crucifixion are even divided into quarters, or "watches," of three hours each (Mk. 14 17, 41, 72; 15 1, 25, 33, 34, 42), each marked by its own significant event. Knowledge of the importance anciently attached to (chronologically) correct observance of the Easter vigil,⁶ fast, and feast, suggests that these precise notes of time are made by the (Roman) evangelist in the interest of ritual.

Thus on the eve of Good Friday "at evening" (Mk. 14 17) the Church celebrates its "Passover of the Lord." Mark's narrative and its parallels explicitly note at the close (ver. 25) that henceforth the observance is made "new in the kingdom of God." The closing "hymn" receives particular mention (ver. 26). Through the midnight watches the Church keeps its Passover vigil⁷ (Ex. 12 42), remembering the boastful word of Peter, and his denial of his Lord "at cock-crowing." The command "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation" emphasized by the contrast of Jesus with the sleeping disciples, and by the remorse of unfaithful Peter, occupies the salient point of the story (14 38, 72). Thus again "at dawn" of the following day (Good Friday), the Church recalls the "good Confession witnessed before Pontius Pilate." The second watch is marked by the Crucifixion "at the third hour."⁸ Next, at the midday

⁶ See above, note 5.

⁷ See the chapter on "Quartodecimanism" in my *Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate*, 1910, pp. 412-439. The vigil with its readings from the Gospels (*διανυκτερεύοντες ἐν ἀναγνώσει*) formed a constant feature of the observance, while debate raged as to time and duration of the fasting.

⁸ The Fourth Gospel particularly specifies the sentence to the cross as given "at the sixth hour," Jn. 19 14.

watch, comes the Darkness "at the sixth until the ninth hour," with the parting cry "at the ninth hour." The fourth watch ends with the Burial "when even [sunset] was now come, it being the Preparation" [Friday].

The strongest proof that these exact notes of time in the Synoptic (i.e. Markan) passion story are really made in the interest of ritual is the singular contrast afforded by the Fourth Gospel. This narrative has almost equally minute notation for the chronology of the passion period, but follows a different and irreconcilable system. In John we have datings not by days of the week (cf. Mk. 15 42), but by days of the (lunar) month (Nisan). The reckoning begins as in Mark with the Anointing (Jn. 12 1 ff. = Mk. 14 1 ff.); only according to John this—or rather the Arrival in Bethany, sunset marking the beginning of a new day—occurs not two but *six* days before the passover. Doubtless Epiphanius⁹ is correct in connecting the story of the Anointing (five days before passover according to Jn. 12 2) with the Mosaic law for the "setting apart of the passover lamb" (Ex. 12 3). Jewish ritual fixes this observance in fact "on the tenth day" (of Nisan), i.e. five days before the passover. Quartodecimans, who observed Easter coincidently with the Jewish feast, and prided themselves on their conformity herein to "the [Mosaic] law," "took the sheep from the tenth day, recognizing the name of Jesus from the *iota*" (i.e. the I of Ἰησοῦς, in numerical value = 10).¹⁰ Fortunately the *Syriac Didascalia* affords positive confirmation of this obscure intimation of Epiphanius, by declaring (c. xxi) that "on Monday *tenth* of *Nisan* Jesus was in the house of Simon the Leper" (cf. Mk. 14 3 with Jn. 12 1 f.).

The Johannine paschal datings continue (12 12) with the Triumphal Entry "on the morrow" (Nisan 11?),

⁹ Panar. I, 3.

¹⁰ Epiphanius *ibid.*

followed (Nisan 12?) by a Withdrawal (12 36), which concludes the public ministry. Jesus is henceforth with "his own." Whatever uncertainty might exist as to the dating of Entry and Withdrawal is corrected in the next note of time; for when the story resumes (13 1 ff.) it is still "before the passover" (Nisan 13). The Foot-washing "after supper" marks the beginning of the great day when "Christ our passover also hath been sacrificed" (Nisan 14—slaughter of the lambs), while "the third day" after (Nisan 16, i.e. "Firstfruits") is the day on which Christ rose "and became the Firstfruits of them that slept." The *hexaëmeros* begins with the Anointing (Nisan 10), and culminates with the Resurrection (Nisan 16).

So for the special day of vigil and fasting (Good Friday). As in Synoptic tradition, the whole period is divided in John also, but less minutely and on a different plan. The night of vigil seems to be spent in discourse and prayer until the coming of the betrayer, though there is no mention of a command to watch, or of the disciples' failure to live up to it, but only of Peter's Denial, which is of course, by implication, at cock-crowing.¹¹ "At dawn" (18 28) comes the Confession before Pilate, accompanied by a second positive intimation that the passover feast is still to be celebrated (28 *b*). "The sixth hour" (midday) is marked (19 14), contrary to Synoptic tradition (cf. Mk. 15 25), as that of the fateful Sentence to the Cross; but there is no further note of time till the day closes with the burial at sunset. Then we learn that it was "the Jews' Preparation" (Friday). The following day, we are told (19 31), was "a high day," which would of course follow from its being both a sabbath (by weekly reckoning) and also

¹¹ Peculiarly strong evidence exists both textual and structural for regarding this episode as well as its reflection in the Appendix (Jn. 21 15-19) as a supplement to the earliest form of this Gospel.

First of Unleavened Bread (Nisan 15). There is no further note of time until the Resurrection before dawn "on the first day of the week" (19 42; 20 1).

But to return to our *hexaëmeros*, whose beginning is so distinctly marked in Jn. 12 1 as "six days before passover." The Crucifixion, as we have seen, coincides with the slaughter of the passover lambs in the evening of Nisan 14, the Resurrection with the offering of "first-fruits" of the new harvest on Nisan 16. This coincidence is no fancy of the modern critic, but corresponds, as ancient Quartodecimans pointed out, with the two figures of Paul in First Corinthians. Writing at the season of Passover (16 9) he exhorts the Corinthians first (1 Cor. 5 7 f.) to "put away the old leaven"¹² . . . for Christ our passover is sacrificed for us"; again he declares (15 20, 23, 36 f.): "Now is Christ risen from the dead—like the new corn from the seed—and become the 'first-fruits' of them that slept." The latter of these two figures is adopted in full by our evangelist (Jn. 12 24). The very foundation of ancient Quartodeciman reasoning was this correspondence of the Passion dates with the Mosaic festal calendar. Quartodecimans pointed out that

"The resurrection is a further witness (to the observance of Nisan 14). In point of fact (γούρ) [Christ] rose on the third day, which is the first day of the season of the [seven] weeks of harvest, the day on which it was commanded the priest to offer the sheaf."¹³

Epiphanius (375 A.D.) found a way of harmonizing Synoptic with Johannine chronology by rendering Lk. 22 7 "the day of unleavened bread came, on which they *should have* sacrificed the passover" (i.e. unleavened

¹² Putting away the old leaven is the ceremony which marks midday of Nisan 14 in the Jewish ritual. Hence the expression "the fourteenth, the day on which the [Jewish] people put away the leaven," in Polycrates of Ephesus (195 A.D.).

¹³ Clement of Alex. Fragment in Paschal Chron.

bread—Nisan 15—came on, which the Jews, by error, had counted as Nisan 14 when the lambs are sacrificed).¹⁴ The fault which he finds with the Quartodecimans is that they do not go far enough with their conformation to the Mosaic law. They confined their celebration to a single day; whereas they ought to have chosen the sheep on the tenth day, and so fasted for five days, thus conforming to the general practice of the Church in *celebrating a whole week* (i.e. until Firstfruits, Nisan 16).¹⁵

In a word the passion-chronology of the Fourth Gospel is in the main carefully adapted to the ritual practice which the Quartodecimans of Asia insisted they had received in unbroken tradition from the apostles. It justifies reckoning the chief date “with the [Jewish] people”; but it also “celebrates a whole week.” It makes the Anointing in Bethany correspond with the Setting apart of the Lamb on Nisan 10, the Crucifixion with the Slaughter of the Lamb at evening of Nisan 14, and the Resurrection with Firstfruits on Nisan 16.

On the other hand, it seeks a maximum of agreement with Synoptic tradition by the statement (19 31) that “the day of that sabbath was a high day.” This establishes also the *weekly* fast and feast of primitive Christian practice (cf. Mk. 2 20; 16 2), and produces a partial harmony by assuming that “the Preparation of the passover” (19 14) happened *in that particular year* to be also “the Jews’ Preparation” (i.e. a Friday), so that the ensuing sabbath would be not only the seventh day of the week, but doubly sacred because also the “first day of unleavened bread” (Nisan 15). “First-

¹⁴ This harmonistic device is by no means original with Epiphanius. Eusebius had previously employed it and even the Quartodecimans of the second century accuse their opponents of “making the Gospels conflict,” besides not obeying the (Mosaic) law. Irenaeus, who opposed the Quartodecimans, had a reverse system of harmonizing, adapting the Johannine to Synoptic chronology; but he does not explain how (Haer. II, xxii, 3).

¹⁵ Panar. I, 1, 8; lxx, 12.

fruits" on the morrow would therefore fall on "the first day of the week."

The *Syriac Didascalia* thus appears to be justified in reckoning the Anointing as "on *Monday* tenth of Nisan," which implies the Royal Entry on Tuesday(?), Withdrawal on Wednesday (?), Footwashing on Thursday, followed by Vigil (in the Upper Room), Betrayal and Crucifixion on Friday, Rest in the grave on the Sabbath, and Resurrection on Sunday.

Now if modern critics and commentators on the Synoptic tradition, such as Heitmüller, are correct in speaking of a Markan "scheme of six days" for passion week,¹⁶ it doubtless is intended to begin, like the Johannine, with Monday; though in Synoptic tradition not the Anointing in Bethany, but the Royal Entry (Mk. 11 1-11) signalizes the day. We have thus in *both* traditions a six-day period or *hexaëmeros* leading up to the great anniversary of the Resurrection. It is important to observe, however, that the fundamental reckoning of the fourth evangelist is annual, while the coincidence of week-days is merely harmonistic and incidental. The disciple who celebrated Holy Week according to the calendar of the Fourth Gospel would keep the Lord's Passover "on the day that the [Jewish] people put away the leaven"¹⁷ (Nisan 14). This coincidence with the Jewish feast would occur *every* year. He would *occasionally* find himself in coincidence with Christians of Western observance of Easter, i.e. whenever Nisan 14 happened to fall on Friday. Both traditions, Synoptic as well as Johannine, outline the events of passion week under a "scheme of six days."

There is important confirmation of the "aetiological" method and of the results already outlined, besides a great intrinsic interest, in observing how the fourth evan-

¹⁶ Heitmüller, *Jesus*, 1913, p. 58.

¹⁷ The expression of Polycrates of Ephesus (195 A.D.).

gelist has prefaced his story of the public ministry of Jesus with another *hexaëmeros* of the Master with his disciples. This sequence of days has even the appearance of leading over into the peculiar chronology of John, in much the same way that the *hexaëmeros* of the Priestly Writer of the Pentateuch in Gen. 1 1–2 4 leads over into the chronological system of the sacerdotal law. In this case the feast is that which Chrysostom designates “the first [i.e. of the year], Epiphany.” It was especially honored in the East, and was in fact the counterpart of Easter, having among its other functions that of the sending out from Alexandria of the famous annual “Paschal letters,” which fixed the ecclesiastical calendar for the year.

Every observant reader is struck at once on comparing the Johannine with the earlier Gospels by the large place the fourth evangelist gives, after the Prologue, to a Self-revelation of Jesus to his Disciples at the Baptism of John (Jn. 1 19–2 11). This self-revelation is described as occurring in a sequence of six days and culminates in the Miracle at Cana of Galilee on the seventh. In fact from the point where the Baptist bears his “witness that this is the Son of God” and points Jesus out as “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world,” down to the “manifestation of his glory” which convinces the disciples in Cana, we have in this series of presentations of Jesus in his various messianic functions a complete anticipation of the Synoptic story of the Confession of Peter, Prediction of the Cross, Promise of the *Parousia* and Transfiguration (Mk. 8 27–9 8 and parallels).

Were we to classify the Gospels in accordance with our knowledge of early ritual observance in the Church, we should characterize the Fourth, which begins with the *manifestation* of Jesus to be the Son of God, as an “Epiphany” Gospel; whereas Matthew and Luke, each of which prefixes to Mark an account of Jesus’ miraculous birth,

should be called "Nativity" Gospels. Mark is the common starting-point; but its statement of the divine sonship is manifestly regarded by all as inadequate, Matthew and Luke developing in one direction, John in the other. The development of ritual has light to throw upon the matter.

Ancient observance wavered between the *dies natalis*, and the *dies natalis virtutum domini*. The Gnostic sects even observed the date of Jesus' baptism by John as the "birthday of the Saviour" (γενέθλια τοῦ Σωτήρος), because, as they maintained,

"It was not till [the *Aeon*] Christ descended into Jesus (Mk. 1 10 f.) that he began to do miracles and to heal and reveal the unknown Father, and declare himself openly the Son of the first man."¹⁸

The earlier Gnostics naturally admitted only the Gospel of Mark.¹⁹ Later they gladly availed themselves of the Gospel of John. The Church catholic, on the other hand, in its two more recent Gospels of Matthew and Luke, had meantime supplied the deficiencies of Mark, removing by means of their accounts of Jesus' birth as "Son of God" (Lk. 1 35) the opportunity Mark had afforded to interpret the title "Son of God" in a Docetic or Adoptionist sense. This effort to counteract Gnostic tendencies in the later Synoptic Gospels, also reflected in the second clause of the Apostles' Creed, appears again in very marked degree in the development of ritual observance. The orthodox (especially in the West) emphasized the Nativity, and deprecated the Gnostic disposition to magnify Epiphany as the significant feast. Thus the eighteenth of the letters of Leo (440-481 A.D.) protests to the Sicilian bishops against the tendency there prevalent to regard the baptism of Jesus as having borne the same import for him and conveyed the same grace as the baptism of believers to them. Pope

¹⁸ Irenaeus, Haer. I, xxx, 13. Specifically "Cerinthus" in xxvi, 1.

¹⁹ Irenaeus, Haer. III, xi, 7.

Siricius (385) had protested against the custom of baptizing at Epiphany for this same reason. At first in the East the Nativity was celebrated on the same day as the Feast of the Baptism (January 6), the ancient Feast of the Epiphany of Dionysus. Later in Rome and the West it was celebrated on December 25, the Julian winter solstice, or *dies invicti solis*. This Roman date gradually took the place of January 6, so that Epiphanius even goes so far as to fix a new date (November 8) for the Baptism. To quote (in abstract) the clear and scholarly article of Professor Kirsopp Lake ("Epiphany" in the *Dictionary of Religion and Ethics*):

"In the fourth century in Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria, and probably elsewhere, before December 25th had been accepted as the date of the Nativity, January 6th was observed as the feast *both* of the Nativity and the Baptism. Silvia's account of her pilgrimage (325 A.D.) shows that in Jerusalem January 6th was observed as the feast of the Nativity. Whether it was also (in Jerusalem) the feast of the Baptism is doubtful. F. C. Conybeare's researches into Armenian ritual seem to prove the Armenian a combination of the Jerusalem rite celebrating the Nativity and a Greek rite (Alexandrian or Antiochian) celebrating the Baptism."

The meaning of this is that in Jerusalem, as elsewhere, orthodox ritual felt the dangers still attaching to the observance of the ancient (pagan) feast of the Epiphany of Dionysus. The ritual for this feast, almost exactly as described by Epiphanius for the *Koraeon*, or Temple of *Kόρη* (the Virgin goddess) at Alexandria, is repeated to this day on December 24-25 in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem.²⁰ With the Gospels of Matthew

²⁰ Those who, like the present writer, have attended the all-night observance of Dec. 24-25 in Bethlehem will think themselves almost to be reading an account of this Christian ritual in Epiphanius' description. The feast of *Kόρη* (Virgin mother of Dionysus) was celebrated on Jan. 6. The preceding night (Jan. 5-6) was spent in singing and worship of the images of the gods. At dawn descent in procession was made to the crypt, bringing up thence a wooden image which had the sign of the cross and a star of gold on hands, knees, and head. After being carried in procession this was returned to the crypt. The Virgin (*Kόρη*) was declared to have given birth to the *Aeon*. Compare with this the present-day ritual for Dec. 24-25 at Bethlehem.

and Luke Jerusalem observance first makes the primitive celebration of Epiphany, or "Manifestation" of Godhood, a celebration of divine *birth*. Ultimately under Roman influence it adopts a new date. The Fourth Gospel, on the other hand, remains true to the primitive sense of the Markan tradition. It ignores the birth stories, and treats "the beginning of the gospel" as a *Manifestation* of the Godhood, first to the Baptist, at Jordan, afterward to the disciples at Cana. The interval between the two is a six-day period of didactic preparation.

The fourth evangelist is not only "spiritual," but conservative and harmonistic. Gnostic misconstruction is met in two ways. We have first a Prologue presenting a Pauline doctrine of Incarnation, which ends with the explicit declaration (1 14 ff.) that the Logos "became *flesh* and tabernacled among us, and we beheld his glory." As Irenaeus justly observes,²¹ "According to the opinion of no one of the heretics was the Logos of God *made flesh*." Secondly, the Baptism itself, so misused in the interest of Docetic and Adoptionist tendencies, is now thrown completely into the background. The reader only learns of it by implication (1 32 f.), while every device of language is employed to make unmistakably clear that its significance is exclusively declaratory (1 19-27, 33). John's baptism is purely and solely that *John* may "see and bear witness that this is the Son of God." Its significance to the (supposably) repentant multitudes who were also baptized is absolutely ignored. To Jesus it has none.

We are not now concerned primarily with this general contrast between Epiphany gospels and Nativity gospels. It is enough merely to point out the difference of the fourth evangelist's method from that of the second and third for meeting the misuse of Mark. We propose to deal merely with the chronological framework in which the fourth evangelist has compacted all that he has to

²¹ Haer. III, xi, 3.

tell of Jesus' Self-manifestation to the Disciples, noting that he combines the Synoptic traditions of the Declaration of the Baptist, the Call of the First Disciples and the Declaration of the Messiahship and Confession of Peter at Caesarea Philippi into a great complex of Witness to Jesus as "Son of God" (1 34), "Lamb of God" (1 29, 36), "Messiah, which is being interpreted Christ" (41), "him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write" (45), and finally (51) "Son of man." The point to be brought out is that here as at the close of his narrative the evangelist has divided his material into the form of a *hexaëmeros*, culminating "on the third day" after the declaratory discourses (1 19-51) in a symbolic "beginning of his signs in Cana of Galilee," where Jesus "*manifested his glory* and his disciples believed on him."

It is fortunately possible to prove that the early oriental Church understood this "sign" of the turning of the water into wine following upon the Baptism "in Bethany beyond Jordan" (Jn. 1 28) with the Self-revelation to the Disciples, as really belonging to the Feast of Epiphany on January 6th, just as it understood the Anointing in (the other) Bethany, the Triumphal Entry, Footwashing, Crucifixion and Resurrection, as belonging to the feast of "the Passover of the Lord" which constituted its other great Holy Week.

As regards the antiquity of Christian veneration for the feast of the Baptism of Jesus we have testimony beyond all dispute. Clement of Alexandria describes the followers of the arch-gnostic Basilides (*ca.* 125 A.D.) as celebrating it on January 6th (11th Tybi), the date of the Epiphany of Dionysus. Some, however, observed January 10th.²² As with the pagan festival in the *Koraeon*, the preceding night was spent as a preparatory vigil,

²²Tybi 15. This was probably to conform to the Basilidean system of thirties and halves of thirty. Jesus was *thirty* years of age. His ministry covered *fifteen* years of the reign of Augustus and fifteen of that of Tiberius, &c.

“readings” taking the place in the Christian rite of the “singing and worship of the images” in the pagan.²³

Was there, besides this vigil corresponding to the vigil of the resurrection feast, an observance of preliminary days more or fewer in number? It is difficult to trace back in orthodox observance just what days of preparation may have been prescribed for the great “first feast” of the year. In the Mozarabic or Spanish missal, as well as in the Breviary, there is first mention of a “Sunday before Epiphany”; next a mass *in jejunió Epiphaniae*, i.e., a fast of three days covering January 3–5. This is doubtless primarily intended for catechumens in preparation for baptism, January 6th being the favorite date. That these preliminary days were occupied with the “laying of the foundation of repentance from dead works and faith toward God,” follows from all our knowledge of the “teachings of baptisms” and of the primitive system of catechetics. But it is apparent that usage differed. Just as in the case of the preparation for Easter, as described by Irenaeus: “Some think they should fast one day, others two, yet others more.” By the time of Epiphanius “a whole week” of observance (not of course unbroken fasting) was the general practice of the Church before Easter. All we can be sure of is that the practice of baptizing at Epiphany made necessary a preliminary period of teaching as well as the days of fasting and night of vigil.

Is it then unreasonable to trace a connection between the “six days” of “teaching” which according to Mark 9 2 and Mt. 17 1 separate the Self-declaration of Jesus as the Christ to the disciples at Caesarea Philippi from the “theophany” of the Transfiguration, and the Johannean six days which intervene between the Witness of the Baptist that this is the Son of God, and the “Manifestation of his glory” to the disciples? The parallelism in

²³ Strom. I, xxi, 146, ἑορτάζουσι προδιανυκτερεύοντες ἐν ἀναγνώσει.

content of teaching is not unsupported by traces of ritual interest even in the Synoptists. For the theophany is given at the close of a night of vigil wherein the drowsiness of "Peter, James, and John" is contrasted with the prayerful watching of Jesus, as in the story of Gethsemane (Lk. 9 32), and the Johannine preliminary days have as their content an equivalent for the teaching at Caesarea Philippi.²⁴

Unfortunately we have no clear light from primitive practice beyond the data already given to determine whether the "teaching of baptisms" or other services preceding Epiphany covered this exact number of days, or only something like it. Our use of the term *hexaëmeros*, is somewhat general, meaning days of preparation for a sacred occasion like those leading up to the sabbath in Gen. 1 1-2 4, or those leading up to the theophany to Moses in Ex. 24 16, whether an exact correspondence of day for day can be traced or not. If, however, we simply take the notes of time as given in the Johannine account of the Witness to Jesus at his Baptism and Manifestation of his Glory to the Disciples in Jn. 1 19-2 11, we shall have the following succession of days: Day *one*: John's Proclamation of his Mission to Baptize in "Bethany beyond Jordan," 1 19-28. Day *two*: John's Witness to Jesus "on the morrow," 29-34. Day *three*: Sending of the two First Disciples to Jesus, who begin to learn of him "about the tenth hour," 35-42. Day *four*: "on the morrow," full Self-declaration of Jesus to the Disciples, including Confession of Peter and Promise of the Revelation of the Son of man, 43-51. At this point follows a vacant day like the sabbath after the crucifixion—day *five*—and "on

²⁴ The variant of Lk. 9 28—"about eight days"—would merely indicate the backward instead of the forward look; as the later Church spoke of "the octave" of Epiphany. To Luke the Confession of Peter would be the Epiphany and the Transfiguration its "octave." To Mark and Matthew it would be the beginning of preparation.

the third day" is the Wedding at Cana—day *six*—2 1. The miracle by which Jesus "manifested his glory and his disciples believed on him" (2 11) follows in the evening. It comes therefore at the beginning of the *seventh* day from the Baptism, in which it was given to John to "see and bear witness that this is the Son of God."

For completeness' sake a possible explanation should be added of the single minuter note of time relating to the precise hour when on the third day the first disciples accepted Jesus' invitation and placed themselves under his instruction through the night until the ensuing morning (1 39). If the aetiological method be applied, it will appear more reasonable to compare such ritual notes as Mk. 15 25, 33 f., and Jn. 19 14, than to imagine the evangelist cherishing a sentimental regard for the precise hour of his first contact with Jesus.

In my volume, *The Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate*, 1910, I cited the following fact:

"A very ancient note of time embodied in the 'Western' text of Acts 19 9 informs us that Paul's preaching 'in the school of Tyrannus' at *Ephesus*, was 'daily from the fifth to the tenth hour.'"

If the independent indications of acquaintance on the part of this "Western" interpolator with early conditions in Phrygia justify us in looking upon this as evidence that in Ephesus public preaching customarily ended "at the tenth hour," this would be the natural time to begin the instruction of catechumens.

Further indications are not wanting to lead us to look upon this Johannine story of the Declaration of the Son of God and the Manifestation of his Glory in a Beginning of Miracles somewhat as a series of lessons for Epiphany. But on these we cannot dwell. Limitations of space forbid also that we should here consider the noteworthy connection between the two groups of narratives which Mark has placed the one

at the opening of the Galilean Ministry, the other at the beginning of the Journey to Calvary (Mk. 1 1-39 and 8 27-9 29). In each case we have a declaration of Jesus to be the Son of God, followed by a Manifestation of his Glory, though on the former occasion the Manifestation consists of a Beginning of Miracles at the great Sabbath in Capernaum (Mk. 1 14-39). In each case we have a Voice from Heaven declaring the Sonship, and an Opposition between Sonship "according to the things that be of God," and "the things that be of men." We even have the Rebuke of the Tempter in the same words,²⁵ although in the Temptation story it is literally Satan who presents the lower ideal, whereas at Caesarea Philippi it is Peter(!). In each case we have, finally, suggestions of the prayers, fastings, and vigils of Jesus, in greater or less contrast with the disciples (cf. Mk. 1 13, 35-39 and parallels, with 9 4-6 and parallels). Jn. 1 19-2 11, considered as lessons for Epiphany, would combine the essential factors of both these Synoptic occasions, as we have seen; while Jn. 2 12 briefly dismisses the Markan account of the Beginning of Miracles. Upon this correspondence we cannot delay, because the really decisive evidence connecting the Johannine *hexaëmeros* with Epiphany is as yet untouched.

The reader in any degree open to the suggestions already made must surely begin to ask: Is there any clear proof connecting this portion of the Fourth Gospel with the ancient celebration of Epiphany on January 6th as the Feast of the Baptism of Christ and Manifestation of his divine Powers (*natalis virtutum*)? And if such connection exists, can it be proved that the observances are not dependent on the Gospel, instead of conversely? The fact is indisputable that in all the

²⁵ Mark does not indeed give the moral content of the Temptation story, but only states the fact (1 13). The moral content is reserved for 8 27-33; but the occurrence of the Rebuke (8 33) in the very words of Mt. 4 10 cannot be accidental, and the transfer is the significant point.

most ancient rituals Jn. 2 1-11 is the lesson for Epiphany; even the West, when transferring the significance of the feast to the Coming of the Magi, *still retaining the Wedding in Cana* as part of the lesson. But may it not be that the Beginning of Miracles was chosen simply from appropriateness? Why suppose that Jn. 2 1-11 was written to fit the occasion?

The answer is apparent to all who know the real antiquity of the Feast of the Epiphany, and the nature of its pre-Christian observance. For January 6 was not chosen to commemorate the Baptism of Jesus and Manifestation ("Epiphany") of his divine power because of a historical tradition that he was actually baptized on January 6, any more than December 25 was chosen because of a historical tradition that the *dies invicti solis* happened to be Jesus' real birthday. The date, January 6, was chosen because in Egypt and throughout the oriental world it had been from time immemorial the feast of the "Epiphany of Dionysus," the god of returning light and life. The proof that Jn. 2 1-11 is written with an eye to the celebration of this Feast of Epiphany (in Christianized form) and not conversely, is the fact that the "Beginning of Miracles" substituted by the fourth evangelist for the Markan exorcisms and healings in Capernaum is an unmistakable parallel to the wonders told in Egypt, Arabia, Phoenicia, Ionia, and doubtless elsewhere also, of the Epiphany of Dionysus. For as Pliny, Pausanias, and a host of writers both heathen and Christian make clear, the *turning of water to wine* at his festival on January 5-6 was the typical wonder of the god of the vine.²⁶ In some sanctuaries of the god

²⁶ Pliny, Nat. Hist. II, 231, relates of the consul Mucianus that he believed the story, Andro in insula templo Liberi patris fontem nonis Januariis semper vini saporem fundere. Cf. Pausanias, VI, xxvi, 1, 2. Athenaeus, I, 61, p. 34a, relates of a place ἀπέχων ὀκτὼ στάδια τῆς Ἡλείας, ἐν ᾧ οἱ ἐγχώριοι κατακλείοντες τοῖς Διονυσίοις χαλκοῦς λέβητας τρεῖς κενοὺς παρόντων τῶν ἐπιδημούντων ἀποσφραγίζονται καὶ ὕστερον ἀνοίγοντες εὐρίσκουσιν οἴνου πεπληρωμένους. See a long list of further authorities cited by Walter Bauer Hdb. z. N. T., Johev., ad loc.

the miracle was performed on water contained in stone or brass receptacles; in other localities the spring or stream itself was turned to wine on the anniversary. Epiphanius knows of the belief as attaching to the wondrous Nile as well as to the marvellous springs of Petra and Gerasa. He had himself tasted the water changed to wine at Cibyra in Caria.²⁷ The change took place, he expressly says, annually, at Epiphany, *on the anniversary of the miracle at Cana*.

In the case of streams like the Nile and the Adonis (Nahr Ibrahim) where the change of color at time of flood has produced legends traceable to a remote antiquity, the physical origin of the legend is unmistakable. Thus the "green water" of the Nile at Cairo at "low Nile," produced by quantities of algae from the swamps of the Soudan, passes away with the first rise (early in July), the algae being unable to live in turbid water.

"By August the river in lower Egypt is full of dark, red-brown sediment, brought down by the Blue Nile and the Atbara."²⁸

That the pagan legend of the blood of the slaughtered Osiris cast into the Nile has its origin in this phenomenon of the rapid change in color at the beginning of flood from "green" to "dark red-brown," will not be doubted even by those who hesitate to attribute a similar origin to the biblical story of Moses' turning its waters to blood. The same is of course true of the legend of the slaughtered Adonis and the Adonis river, which annually at the beginning of flood (January) discolours the whole Mediterranean off the shore at Byblus (Jebeel) with its blood-red sediment. But we are concerned simply with the antiquity and extent of the Dionysiac legends of the

²⁷ Panar. li.

²⁸ F. R. Cana in Enc. Brit. ed. xi, s.s. "Nile."

turning of water to wine on January 6th.²⁹ Additional evidence of so well attested a fact is hardly required; but it is well to note that the modern custom (in Russia and elsewhere) of blessing streams and rivers at Epiphany (January 6) goes back not only to Christian but into pre-Christian antiquity.³⁰ It was the day in which Christ by his baptism had "consecrated the streams of Jordan," as Ignatius himself (115 A.D.) writes to the Ephesians (xviii) of the passion of Jesus as "cleansing water" (cf. Jn. 2 4). Hence one of the functions of the day was the solemn consecration of water for baptisms throughout the year. Just as the modern pilgrim still obtains his bottle of water for baptisms from Jordan at the place of the Baptizing, so in pagan times, as we learn from Aristides Rhetor (135 A.D.), it was part of the *ὕδρεσις* (i.e. Water-festival) in Alexandria on Tybi 11 (January 6) to draw water and store it up for purposes of lustration. This water was exported like the modern Jordan water, and was supposed to improve with age like wine.³¹

Finally, Epiphany as the "first feast" came to have the same calendar importance for the Church as the *Rosh-ha-shanah* for the Synagogue. For on it the "Paschal letters" were sent out to determine the fasts and feasts of the ecclesiastical year.

It may, of course, be mere coincidence that the *hexaëmeros* with which the Fourth Gospel begins, has its

²⁹ Egyptian datings are of course different. Variants arise from causes both physical and religious. The flood of Nile begins in July, not January. On the other hand, the calendar is largely determined by astral phenomena, so that sun-myths and nature-myths intermingle. Finally, the Egyptian calendar rotates through the year, the Egyptian year being defective.

³⁰ The same Maximus Taurinensis who speaks of Epiphany as the *dies natalis virtutum* (sc. Domini), gives three alternative traditions of the origin of its observance: *Ferunt enim hodie Christum Dominum nostrum vel (1) stella duce a gentibus adoratum, vel (2) invitatum ad nuptias aquas in vino vertisse, vel (3) suscepto a Iohanne baptisate consecrassse fluentia Jordanis* (Hom. xxix).

³¹ *Oratio*, Oxford ed. of 1730, ii, 573 and 612. Cited by Lake in *Dictionary of Religion and Ethics*, s.v. "Epiphany."

start on New Year's Day of the Julian calendar (January 1). The "Witness of John" to the Jews (1 19-28), like his baptism of Jesus, falls appropriately within the limits of the old year; for John, though greatest of the prophets, is less than the least in the kingdom of God. But "on the morrow" he proclaims Jesus as "Lamb of God," Giver of "the Spirit," and "Son of God" (29-34). This (*if* the evangelist has the beginning of the year in mind) would be January 1. For the Confession of Peter "on the morrow" (35-42) falls thus on January 2, the Promise of the Revelation of the Son of man given "on the morrow" (43-51) falls on January 3, the Arrival in Cana "on the third day" falls on January 5, and the Changing of the Water of "the Jews' Purifications" to the New Wine of the Kingdom of God takes place in the evening of January 5-6, i.e. on "Twelfth Night," or Epiphany.

However the case may be with this possibility of an attempted adjustment in Jn. 1 19-2 11 to the Julian calendar, as in Cappadocia was the practice for the observance of Easter,³² it is highly probable that the synchronism with the rebuilding of the temple, in the story of the beginning of the public ministry, which in Jn. 2 13-22 follows immediately after the Manifestation "to the Disciples," has been purposely adapted to mark the birth of Jesus as synchronous with the rebuilding of the temple and consequently his death as occurring when he had lived exactly a jubilee of years ($7 \times 7 = 49$). For, as we have shown in the work already cited,³³ the "year of the two Gemini" (29 A.D.) was an accepted date for the Crucifixion from the very earliest period to which our sources reach back. And yet this date is *certainly*

³² The Cappadocian Quartodecimans adopted March 25, i.e. vernal equinox of the Julian calendar, in every year as their fixed date for the Feast of the Resurrection. See Bacon, *Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate*, 1910, p. 391 ff.

³³ *Fourth Gospel*, &c., p. 390 ff.

incorrect; for *no* method of calculating the incidence of passover permits it to fall on either a Thursday or a Friday in 29 A.D. The date 29 A.D. for the Crucifixion is *artificial*, like the elaborate datings of the Jewish rabbis, and like those of Hippolytus and the later Christian chronographers. But it is the chronological starting-point for both Luke and John. Only the fourth evangelist looks upon Jesus as older "when he began." The synchronism of Jn. 2 20, substituted for Lk. 3 1 f. at approximately the same point in the story, means (as it was understood to mean by the author of *de montibus Sina et Sion*) that Jesus attained, either at this passover or the next, the age of 47 years. At the passover of Jn. 6 4 he had therefore attained 48 years, at the ensuing feast of tabernacles of Jn. 7 2 he was "not yet fifty years old" (8 57); but at the passover of the crucifixion he had attained 49 (i.e. 7×7) years, so that the beginning of his fiftieth or "jubilee" year marked "the hour when he should be glorified."

This interpretation of the calendar and chronology of the fourth evangelist implies of course that he does not accept the statement of Lk. 3 23 that "Jesus when he began (his ministry) was about thirty years of age." But what is the real source and value of this Lukan date? In my article "*Lukan vs. Johannine Chronology*"³⁴ and the further discussion of the subject in the volume already referred to,³⁵ I endeavored to show that the item Lk. 3 23 stands absolutely alone, though its clear and positive statement has carried everything before it in later attempts to fix the date of Jesus' birth. Matthew's narrative certainly implies that he was much older. Luke's own sources imply that he was born "in the days of Herod the king" (Lk. 1 5), if not that he had "fully attained the age of forty years" when he began

³⁴ *Expositor*, vii, 15 (March, 1907), pp. 206-220.

³⁵ *Fourth Gospel*, &c., ch. xv.

his ministry (Ac. 7 23). Moreover the ancient tradition of "the elders" derived by Irenaeus³⁶ from Papias, that Jesus had fully attained the age of the teacher (forty years), when he began to teach, is by no means to be lightly disregarded. But while able to show that the thirty-year item was in conflict with earlier tradition, and suspecting that it stood connected with the system of reckoning by fifteens and thirties characteristic of the Basilidean chronography, I was not then able to point to any specific passage to which it might be traced. I may venture now to refer to the statement of Jerome in his commentary on Ezekiel concerning the current interpretation of Ezek. 1 1. He tells us that the date, "In the thirtieth year," was usually understood of the prophet's age,³⁷ but while denying this goes on to explain that "the fourth month in the fifth day of the month" means January fifth "the day still observed as Epiphany," and that "symbolically" Ezekiel in saying "In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, the fifth day of the month, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God" is "prefiguring the Lord and Saviour, who came to his baptism at thirty years of age, which for man is the age of maturity." Thereafter in spite of his rejection of the current interpretation Jerome adds:

"It must also be understood that the Lord came to baptism in the thirtieth year of his age, in the fourth month, that which among us is called January and stands first at the opening of the year. . . . And he [Ezekiel] adds 'the fifth day of the month' to signify the baptism, at which 'the heavens were opened' to Christ, and this is still the adorable day of Epiphany."³⁸

I cannot but think that in this ancient dating of Epiphany on the basis of Ezek. 1 1, as occurring on

³⁶ Haer. II, xxii, 5. The whole chapter is significant.

³⁷ Non, ut plerique aestimant, tricesimus annus aetatis prophetae dicitur.

³⁸ Comm. in Ezek. ad loc.

January 5, in the thirtieth year of Jesus' age, we have the real origin of the unique statement of Lk. 3 23, that when "the heavens were opened" to Jesus, and he "saw visions of God" and began his ministry, "he was about thirty years of age." The fourth evangelist has the same dating for Epiphany, but holds that Jesus had nearly attained the age of *fifty* years. Irenaeus, as we know, attempts to reconcile the two by extending the ministry over a period of twenty (!) years.³⁹

³⁹ Haer. II, xxii.